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# Going and Coming

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By ELMER H. CURTISS  
Formerly of Company K, 161st Infantry, Sunset Division  
and  
Company H, 102nd Infantry, Yankee Division

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## Going and Coming as a Doughboy

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WITH a suitcase well packed with things I expected to need on the journey I left San Francisco for Kaiser Bill's dugout November 3, 1917. I stepped off the train at Camp Lewis exactly three days later. We spent that day answering to roll call, getting a physical examination, assignment to quarters, listening to instructions on army life, standing in line to get our equipment, and sending our civilian clothes home.

We were called out at 5:45 the next morning for our first reveille, and lined up for exercise at 5:30. The morning was bitter cold. After breakfast we drilled for four hours. We hiked three miles after dinner to get a thorough physical examination and our first typhoid inoculation. My arm was very sore, and two men fainted near me. Out of 40,000 men in the camp 700 of us were picked to start to Camp Mills the next afternoon.

As our sixteen-car train passed through Seattle we shook hands with hundreds of pretty girls who swarmed along the sides of the train. We took a run in Spokane the next morning. At Troy, Montana, the people turned out with fruit and candy. Minot, North Dakota, met us at 11 o'clock at night with hot coffee and a regular banquet, anything almost that we wanted. We paraded in Minneapolis for the exercise. This stunt was repeated at St. Thomas, Ontario, and at Niagara Falls, where we crossed over to the American side.

At Camp Mills I was assigned to Co. K, 161 Infantry, made up mostly of the Washington National Guard. My first task was carrying wood for the kitchen. This work was interrupted frequently by drill calls, various shots in the arm, or some kind of an inspection. Our quarters were squad tents. The assignments of ten men to a tent made moving around difficult.

In the morning we were given only five minutes to dress in the bitter cold. We were immediately given some vigorous exercise which would warm us a little. We then went to the mess kitchen, drew our rations and ate them out in the open in front of our tents. We were taught not to throw anything away, and encouraged to obey this rule by the guard posted over the garbage can.

An officer told us all about the advantages of War Risk Insurance and I took the limit, \$10,000, which cost me \$6.70 a month. I received my second shot in the arm immediately after signing for my insurance.

We received rifles and ten rounds of ammunition November 22. That day I walked three miles to a hotel and got a bath. There was no charge for soldiers who furnished their own soap

and towel. I washed out a pair of sox and hung them under my bed to dry. They were frozen the next morning. After that I got up every morning at 2:30 and started a fire to keep from freezing.

I spent Thanksgiving in New York. My ticket cost me \$1.20. That left me 30c for candy. The next day we hiked 15 miles, carrying our rifles. It was chow time when we got back and we lost no time scampering to the mess hall. The next day we practised squad and platoon drill in our company street. A large blister on my left heel kept me wide awake all the time.

At night we usually chipped in and bought a pie or two and sat around swapping yarns. One night a sailor who had just returned on a ship which had carried officers to England spent the night in our tent.

My squad was on fatigue in December. We did all kinds of work around camp, including K. P. The marking of our clothing at this time led us to believe we would be leaving shortly. We worked for several days on a large ditch to carry off storm water.

When the wood supply in our tent was exhausted we organized a foraging party and came back loaded in no time. Then we made a fire that would have warmed up the Devil himself.

I received my 4th shot in the arm early in December. The Q.M. was busy boxing all supplies and material on hand. I began breaking in my trench shoes, and my sox, which were about a quarter of an inch thick, never kept my feet warm.

One of the boys in my tent was sick, and we were put under quarantine. The doctor never even came to see the fellow to see what was the matter. That night I washed a suit of underwear and dried it in front of the stove. We sat around the next day raising Cain, picking dust out of the air, and waiting for Sawbones to inspect us.

I had an awful appetite the next day. I made seconds on the stew, hot prunes, and coffee, and put away 7 slices of bread. Snow the next day was followed by rain and a young cyclone which kept all hands holding the tent down. There was a bread shortage the next day, and we bought a 15 cent loaf for the bunch.

December 11th we packed everything in our barracks bags and shipped them ahead. We emptied the straw out of our ticks, turned in our cots, and had nothing to sleep on for two nights. We stood in line four hours on the dock in Hoboken before we were checked off and allowed to board the "President Lincoln," which was a former Boche freighter taken over by the government and converted into a transport.

After we had found our bunks on the third deck I managed to get a few lines started to the home folks by way of the tug which drew up alongside after we left the harbor. After lying at

anchor for two days we started across via the long southern route in order to avoid submarines and icebergs. I was glad to get my feet on solid ground again after eighteen days at sea and two more at anchor outside of Brest.

We were taken off in lighters and marched immediately to the train. Here we had our first glimpse of German prisoners of war loading coal under guard. At first glance the French freight cars seemed about the size of a match box and capable of holding about a dozen men, but by the time they called our car loaded there were forty-two of us packed into the car like sardines.

It was the last day of the old year. We feasted on corned Willy and trench pastry, called hard tack in the history books. Sleep was out of the question. We swapped yarns instead of throwing confetti and blowing horns as we stood there in the swaying car, so close that when one man moved the whole crowd moved.

Our first stop was for two days. We were lucky enough to get a little straw on which to spread our blankets out under the stars. Then we were shipped on to Mehon where we unloaded our packs. My squad was detailed to handle the supplies. We were glad, for it saved us a long hike and we were very tired. As we rode along that five miles of ice-covered road I thought the truck would skid off the road every minute.

The coffee served to us by the French was stronger than Atlas with no sugar nor milk.

January 12th it rained all night, melting the snow, and the next morning we started building railroads. The hardest part of this work was lifting the steel rails and ties soaked in water.

I received my first pay January 25th, amounting to 264 francs. I started 200 francs for home in the first mail. The Y. M. C. A. had just completed a splendid building containing a stage, pool tables, reading and writing tables, best of all a canteen where we could buy a number of articles.

January 29th I received a package from home containing some oil of wintergreen which helped a cold I had been unable to break up. We had to get up at 5:45 and be out at 6 for fifteen minutes exercise. By this time we had finished our mess hall and no longer had to eat out in the open where we were always cold.

February 6th a man was discovered in my company who had been sent over by mistake. It seems that he had a wife and one child dependent upon him for support.

We had a hard time getting used to French time. 1 p.m. with them is 13 o'clock, 2 p. m. 14 o'clock, etc.

February 9th I received a box containing fruit cake, peanut candy, nigger toes, and a pair of gloves from my father. I managed to get a pass to town Sunday. Joan of Arc lived there

at Mehon for some time, part of the time in a large tower 200 feet high. We paid the woman at the entrance 15 sous and were permitted to climb to the top of the tower from which we could see the level country stretching away for miles on every side. We could see one of the numerous French freight canals running through the village.

We visited the dungeon where political prisoners were kept, and then went over to a very beautiful church. We could not see much of the church, as services were being held just then, so we left in a few minutes and went to a French cafe, where we ordered eggs, potatoes, bread, butter, and wine.

Our next stop was at a photograph shop, where we went through the agony of posing for a picture. The price was 8 francs for a dozen to be finished within a week.

After the railroad was completed we built three warehouses for storing ammunition, 1000 feet long and 100 feet wide. My company unloaded a string of forty cars in one night. Each car contained an average of 140 boxes of French 75 shells, six to a box. These were used principally in shooting at aeroplanes or for barrages in small attacks. We had to work fast to keep warm.

February 21st I was paid 64 francs, and I sent some more money home. I was doing guard duty at the warehouses, four hours on and eight off. We had to walk two miles to get to our posts. It took me fifteen minutes to make the rounds. When relieved we spent our time sleeping or talking. There were five of us together, so we did not get lonesome.

One day I was put on what we called the "Cossack Post." We had a tent full of dynamite and blasting powder for the engineers. It was placed out in a large open field. We had to walk around and around this tent all night, with fixed bayonets. I solved the problem by getting a box on which I could sit down when I got tired. I placed it where I could spot any one immediately who tried to sneak up on me.

I received my photos February 28th. Gas masks had just been issued to us, and we certainly looked like monkeys. I thought for a while that the weight of my steel derby would dislocate my neck.

When orders came for us to move we packed up our belongings and boarded a train of third class coaches, eight men to a compartment. The train stopped at the first village, where I gave a Frenchman ten francs to get us some nuts. He came back with about a bushel, which soon disappeared.

After a long ride we were unloaded and drilled a while in a large field. Few of us had any idea what was coming, as the officers would not tell us anything. Two days travel landed us at Men La Tour, the supply base for the Toul front, about eight miles back of the lines.



We could hear the roar of the guns and we could also see an occasional flash on Mont Sec where the French lost 35,000 men in half an hour trying to hold the death trap after they captured it from the Germans. We had men up in observation balloons so high that they could see everything that was going on and could direct our artillery fire. Now and then they were attacked by Boche planes. If the Boche got close enough under cover of a cloud to set fire to the balloon the observer had to come down in a parachute.

After a hike along a muddy road we found our quarters in the woods about nightfall. We piled our packs and rifles on the mud and unloaded our supplies which had to be carried a considerable distance to our mess kitchen. Every one helped, and the job was soon finished. We had the time of our lives trying to locate our packs in the darkness as no lights were allowed. The barracks which were to be ours for a few days were not yet completed and were also filled with snow. I found a thick coating of ice on my bunk, but I was so tired that I had no trouble sleeping until the bugler got started at 5.45.

It took us two days to finish the roofs on the barracks and install some stoves which warmed them a little. The mud, however, remained very much the same. Our shoes frequently sank to the tops.

The Germans sent enough shells over to keep us on the watch for gas. While on guard we had to be especially watchful, challenging every one. When the gas alarm sounded we were to run through the barracks and give the alarm. One morning while I was sleeping the guard gave the alarm and we had to wear our masks for two and one half hours before we could take them off. The gas sergeant went back and forth and nabbed any one who took off his mask. The punishment was walking around wearing our masks three or four hours the next day under guard, so we kept them on as ordered.

My company was put at work digging trenches six feet deep for telephone cables. Overhead or surface lines were not a success, as even the concussion of the bursting shells seemed to cut the wires. We usually laid four one inch cables in each trench. We passed through several villages, until we reached Beaumont. We had been under shell fire every day, and it was particularly intense here, where they gave us gas every night, and we kept our masks at alert all the time. After the slightest warning of the gas guard we would all be masked in six seconds.

A Klaxon horn which could be heard for miles was the gas alarm most popular with us. The French sometimes used church bells. One Chinaman in my company had such a broad flat nose that the nose clip on the American mask would not fit. He used a French mask which slipped over his whole face, so that he breathed through medicated gauze.

We were the constant targets of Boche snipers who were watching for a chance to pick us off. One night a Boche dropped two bombs near us from a plane. We knew it was a Boche by the peculiar hum of the German motors. The explosions shook us up considerably, but we could not find where the bombs fell the next day.

March 9th we set our clocks and watches ahead an hour, and we found the mornings a little darker and much colder for a while. Our vigorous exercises always warmed us up considerably, however. I had my hair clipped close, and my head felt much cooler in the heat of the day.

There were two dangerous places near us. We crossed one place called Hell's Half Acre. Another place was called Dead Man's Curve. It was a good name, for the Boche had a good view of that bit of road and were ready with their shells every time anything passed in the daytime, and they shelled it continually at night.

We were sorry to hear of the sinking of the ship which brought us over. It was homeward bound, so few lives were lost.

While we were out working an aeroplane was hit by shrapnel which damaged the propellor and the wings. It landed near us, and we went over and took a look at it at lunch time. We were careful to remain at a respectful distance, as we were afraid the Germans might use the plane as a target.

Constant rain made each day like the last. The Y. M. C. A. established branches in our vicinity where we could buy a few things, write letters, have some music, which we all enjoyed, or play a game of checkers.

We all had to go into a gas tester for five minutes. After trying our masks for the length of time we had to take them off and take a whiff of the gas so that we would be able to recognize it during an attack. The tear gas made my eyes watery for a long time.

April 16th, while we were working at our ditch job, shells began dropping mighty close. We all jumped into the ditch and wished it was six feet deeper for a while.

I slipped in the dark the night of April 19th and cut a painful gash in my knee cap. Then my luck turned. I found a ten franc note which came in mighty handy as I happened to be financially embarrassed. Then a box of candy arrived from home. Nothing ever tasted better.

While I was wondering how I could manage to get a photograph of myself and all my equipment up there under shell fire I discovered a French artilleryman billeted in the woods near by who had a special permit from the French government for doing this kind of work. I finally made him understand what I wanted by making an initial payment of tobacco, of which I

had a good supply as I seldom smoked. I paid him eight francs for a dozen pictures.

I received 128 francs for February and March. The government commissary truck came around to us every other day, so that we could buy all the cakes, tobacco and candy we wanted, and best of all, canned fruit, which drew many a franc from my pocket. It helped to keep me healthy, and some of the pies I got by taking a big can to the mess kitchen were certainly great. Of course the cook got his share, but they were worth it.

Prices were very reasonable, only a little above cost. A large can of peaches cost one and one half francs or thirty cents. Soda crackers were thirty centimes or six cents a carton.

April 27th orders were issued prohibiting the people at home sending packages to us, in order to make room for ammunition and other necessary supplies. I sold a watch that refused to run for seventeen francs. I have never seen the man since, so I suppose he and the watch are still going.

We tore down our barracks and moved up through the woods to a position close behind some of our big guns which were firing at Metz. How the ground did rock! I had a tremendous appetite and seldom got enough to eat. I ate heartily, but I was still hungry after many of my meals. I ate canned apricots when I could get them, and the mess sergeant let me fry eggs in my mess kit. I bought them in a village near by. The day we moved I received a large supply of envelopes, enough to last me until I might have a chance to ask the Kaiser for some.

I received a card from Washington acknowledging the receipt of my application for insurance. While the third Liberty Loan was in full swing I suggested that any one owing the Kaiser some money might make him happy by sending him a bond.

Butter was worth six francs a pound, eggs cost four francs, sugar could not be had at any price, but my bunkie and I managed to get a dandy peach pie. We had general inspection Saturday morning of all our equipment, including rifles, beds, sox, underwear, blankets, towel, soap, tooth paste, brush, comb, and razor. Sunday they let us sleep till 7:45, a real treat to us tired boys.

We were getting more and more accustomed to the hardships, but most of us had decided to postpone our immediate return home, as the Kaiser seemed to be deeper in than many of us had thought. The next day we had a terrible thunderstorm and the heaviest rain we had seen for weeks.

Mail call after lunch May 9th came while I was lying down resting a while, but I was up and after it as usual, and was rewarded by six letters. We all wrote home Mother' Day. We

had all been urged to do so, but I needed no encouragement. The boys kept the graphophone in the Y. M. C. A. running ragged.

We had a ball team and we played many a hot game with the 23rd Engineers who were billeted in the woods close by, and with the observation balloon men, who found time, once in a while for a game.

I sent my mother congratulations for her birthday coming in July, telling her I was sorry I could not be at home that day, that we were moving all the time from one place to another, and that it seemed just like beating it out of rooming houses without paying rent.

I had so much trouble keeping my rifle clean that I made a case for it. I had to spend a lot of time cleaning it, for I did not like the idea of getting any extra duty for having a dirty rifle. The least speck of dust was considered grounds for a "bawling-out" before the whole company. At the same time my gun was always ready for any emergency.

One morning while my company was going to work we were turned back by some Military Police who said the Boche had broken through the lines and were attacking the village of Sicheprey. The Americans in the village were outnumbered, but they held on stubbornly while we went back to our barracks in the woods, where we wasted no time getting our rifles and ammunition. We were lined up and given instructions in range finding and handling ammunition. We were even shown how to eject the empty shells from our rifles. The Boche soon hit the back trail, after a sharp fight at close quarters, with machine guns, rifles, and bayonets. Both sides lost heavily.

I was put on K. P. duty May 16th. After a day of scraping kettles, peeling spuds, and serving chow my pal and I got passes to the village. A long walk took us to a small restaurant near Men La Tour, where we feasted on scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, and lemonade which seemed to have considerable kick. We managed to make known our wants with the few French words we knew, aided by gestures. Beer signs were scarcer than hen's teeth, and with all our rubbernecking we failed to locate one.

The Y. M. C. A. tent in Aunseville was hit by a shell which partly demolished it, luckily at night after the canteen was closed. I will never forget that place nor the three cups of hot chocolate I drank there one bitter cold day while the snow was still on the ground. A few boys just back from the front were sitting there eating cakes or whatever they could buy. I sat down and asked them a few questions so I would know what to do if I was rushed up front in an emergency.

Two spies were caught in our vicinity. One Boche at Mandre dressed himself as a peasant woman and went around leading a



cow. When a bunch of soldiers were passing the cross roads he would signal with his rope, and the Boche gunners made a good many hits until a French officer saw a trouser leg one windy day. The firing party was on the job in about two minutes.

The Boche had a young French boy perched in the garret of an old abandoned stone house. When supply wagons, ammunition carts, or troops were passing a certain point the boy signalled with a pocket flashlight until the French caught him.

May 22nd we were treated to a band concert under shell fire. The music sounded mighty good to us. The flies were getting thick, and increased our discomfort considerably. The whole country was green by this time, and the birds never stopped chirping throughout the night. We wondered if the shell fire kept them awake. I slept whenever I got the chance, for I never knew what night I would be wakened by a gas alarm or shell fire.

As I was going to town to the dentist I saw several old French people busy in the fields. One old man was plowing with a donkey, a horse, and old Nellie, the family cow—a queer combination.

Orders came for another move May 29th. After packing our belongings and wrecking our barracks we loaded everything on trucks, rode four miles, and were then given until nightfall to erect them again. We got the mess hall busy first, and then had our shelter all complete before dark.

Then orders arrived to break up our company and use it for replacements. We hiked twelve kilos to Men La Tour, on the Toul front, where we were billeted in what had once been the Red Cross hospital. The patients had all been moved back to a base hospital, following a threat by the Boche to bomb the place. We were glad to get away from there.

We spent June 1st turning in all excess baggage to the Quartermaster. The next day I landed a K. P. job. The mess sergeant was trying hard to spend our mess fund, and we had meat, potatoes, salad, olives, jam, gravy, lemonade, and bread. The time of our feasting was short, for we had our last roll call June 5th. Our officers and friends shook hands with us and bade us good luck. With the cheers of a few non-commissioned officers who were left behind ringing in our ears, we boarded a string of little flat cars and pulled out on the narrow gauge railroad to Bouc where we were given the choice of four companies.

I chose Co. H. 102nd Infantry, in the 26th or Yankee Division. We lined up for chow, consisting of a little soup, bread and coffee, rested a little while, and then started off on a forced march of about 15 kilos. We carried all our equipment, and the new rock surface on the road made walking far from easy.

For hours I felt like dropping with fatigue, but I stuck it out. When we entered an old stone building at 2 a. m. and threw our packs on the ground I was all ready to join the all down and out club, and for once I paid no attention to the shells flying overhead.

The building was half wrecked already by shells, which had nearly demolished the whole village. Mandre had a population of 1000 before the war, but every one had been driven out at the beginning. I needed no second invitation to hunt up the mess kitchen the next morning. It was camouflaged in an old stone building in order to hide the smoke in the daytime, for the Boche shelled the place at the slightest sign of life or activity.

The town was full of dugouts. Signs were posted telling how many men they would hold, and their location, so that we would know just where to go in case of an attack. We saw air battles or enemy planes every day, coming over in search of information and taking pictures of the village.

I sold a lot of stuff that I did not need, keeping one extra suit of underclothes, two blankets, two pairs of sox, a towel, a shaving outfit, and my reserve rations, consisting of four boxes of hard tack and one can of beef.

After a few days we were moved to a part of the town which drew less shell fire and quartered in an attic reached only by a very shaky ladder. I made a bed out of grass which was plentiful everywhere. I went out in several working parties at night, fixing barbed wire entanglements in front of our lines.

The Salvation Army maintained a canteen in what had been a dungeon under a church. Only an expert could locate the entrance among the debris. When I stood up straight my head struck the ceiling. A few planks here and there helped to keep our feet out of the water which covered the floor. Most of the time we could buy eggs in the canteen. We fried them on a dinky little stove and ate them with slices of bread furnished by the army. We just grabbed a loaf and cut off a slice whenever we were hungry. Occasionally we were able to buy six doughnuts for a franc.

A big gun located near our billet kept me awake a good many hours. I kept well and as clean as possible. We bathed in the town wash house which had a large shell hole through the roof. We were glad we were absent when the hole was made.

We assembled our squads in front of our billets at 9 a. m. the night of June 16th and started for the trenches. The village was under heavy shell fire, and we crept from building to building. The team drawing an ammunition cart was frightened by a bursting shell and ran away, with the driver doing his utmost to stop them. Outside the village we marched along a shell lit road, used by all kinds of traffic on the way to our front lines.

Our batteries were busy giving the Boche three for one. They were so well camouflaged that detection was almost impossible, even in the daytime, when the Boche observation balloons were up, and when our guns were put out of commission it was only by a chance hit.

We passed the dangerous points in safety, and made our way to our position, known as "Jerry Woods." We could barely see our hands in front of us in the darkness. Now and then some one would stumble into a shell hole, pick himself up with a grunt, and drop into line again. The rainfall had made the going very slippery, and I had hard work keeping up. I did not want to get lost from the others as my eyesight was very poor.

At last fourteen of us entered a dugout, where we lay down on the straw. I was introduced to my first cooties a few minutes later. I staged a big game hunt the first thing in the morning, and captured a dozen graybacks. It took 100 to buy a cigar, but I did not give up hope. The rats made life interesting, too. We had to stand guard over our hard tack, and it was a race to see which of us would get to eat it. The woods were full of them at night.

Every night for a week I went out into No Man's Land with nine others. We carried rifles and three or four hand grenades. We were prepared to give a good account of ourselves if we ran into a Boche patrol, for the grenades exploded in five seconds after we hit the cap, and it was regarded as a healthy practise to throw them immediately. Our rounds took us past the listening posts. In some places the trenches had been flattened so that we had to crawl in the open where we could be seen by the light of the Boche flares, which revealed everything for hundreds of yards.

By throwing ourselves flat on the ground we managed to escape detection and made our way through the winding trenches to the farthest outposts known as the "sacrifice post." The machine gunners here kept very quiet, listening for sounds of activity or attempted raids. A few of those machine gunners could hold off an army, for they could cut advancing troops down as fast as they appeared.

Later five of us were assigned to a listening post in charge of a corporal. Two men were posted on the parapet watching the Boche lines for raids or attempts to cut the wire. If a barrage, which usually preceded Boche attacks, had been thrown over, we would not have had much chance for escape, as there was no place to hide at that particular point.

Our meals were carried out to us in the dugout by a food detail in big cans which kept everything nice and hot. The kitchen was nearly two miles back of the line, but the kitchen force had to suspend operations frequently when the shells began dropping too close for comfort and safety. The Boche lines

were only 500 yards from our post, and we often heard them talking or singing during the night, and sometimes we heard working parties repairing the wire in front of their trenches.

We were relieved about 2 a. m. July 2nd by a division of fresh troops just arrived from the states. Our sector was regarded as a quiet one well suited for breaking new troops into the joys of trench life. I had considerable difficulty explaining our duties to the relief—how to challenge a person approaching through the trenches, and more important to the relief, how to use the hand grenades in case of an attack. I had been keeping two dozen within reach under a little brush heap all the time.

There was a battery just behind us, much to our disapproval, for the shells which fell short from both directions landed in our neighborhood. Every night and in the early morning the Boche shelled the woods about us, and I soon learned to lie down flat in the trench at certain hours. One morning they dropped thirty Austrain 88 mm. shells rather close to us. The report of the gun always follows these small shells, so the guns are hard to locate. The report of a big gun precedes the shell, and we soon learned to tell the direction from which the big shells came.

Another time I thought my time had come. I heard a big shell coming my direction and threw myself flat in the bottom of the trench. There was a terrific explosion not more than fifty feet away. Shrapnel flew in every direction, and part of the trench caved in on me. I managed to rise to my knees and keep my head above the falling dirt. The corporal came to me on the run, but found me only badly frightened. I could not hear anything for two hours. When our relief arrived I wasted no time getting out of that locality.

After packing up our belongings we started back through the woods along the same road by which we had gone to the front. The night was remarkably quiet, with very little shelling. We rode into Men La Tour on flat cars. At Andelli we found a harvest regiment of Chinese coolies. A long day's hike brought us to Fontenoy, where we found nearly all housing space already taken. A bunch of us made for an old water-power sawmill. My pal and I pitched our tent by the river bank, and spent a good many hours in the water. We had to go into town for our meals. One day, after drawing our rations we bought eggs, cheese and butter at a French farm house. They gave us a handful of delicious strawberries for good luck.

We put two bottles of beer in the river to cool, fried the eggs in our mess kits, and had some feed. It seemed as if we were on a vacation, so far away from the roar of the guns. A bunch of us helped the old people stack their hay in the fields. It only took us a few minutes to do what was for them a long day's work. I talked with an old woman who had been parti-



ally paralyzed by a bomb dropped on the village where she lived. One of her sons had been killed and the other was a prisoner.

My feet were very sore from the long hike, but after ten days rest I was able to fall in with the others when we started to join the reserves back of Chateau Thierry. Each of us carried an extra bandolier of rifle ammunition, making 200 rounds in all, and it took a mighty good man to stand that long hike. We stopped now and then to rest, once for three hours, but the time flew so fast it seemed no more than half an hour.

Again and again I nearly fell in the pitch darkness by stepping into small ruts, but I plugged away, hoping that our destination would soon be reached. The hike continued throughout the day, for my company, but not for me. When I saw a sign announcing it was 29 kilos to Chateau Thierry my heart sank and I knew I could not last, as several had already fallen out. There was a number of Boche prisoners here piling lumber and moving supplies and ammunition, as it was the distributing point for this sector.

We were going into reserve for the big drive, so we could not stop, and kept on until we reached the top of a long cobblestone hill. Nearly every man was having trouble with his feet, and we received orders to rest a while at the top of the hill. I took off my shoes and used my pack for a pillow. My feet fairly burned, and it was a welcome relief to get those heavy trench shoes off for a little while.

A large truck loaded with four pound loaves of bread baked by the French for the American army climbed the grade while we lay there. I suggested to the man next to me that a couple of those loaves belonged to us, and he took the hint, without letting the driver see him. We were hungrier than rats, and that bread did not last any time at all. I lay down for a little snooze, expecting my corporal to wake me, and woke up about four hours later, with my company nowhere in sight.

I pulled my trench shoes onto my swollen feet and started out with hopes of overtaking my company somewhere along the roadside. I met several officers and asked them if they could direct me to the 26th Division. One of them consulted a map and sent me on down the dusty road. After climbing what I took to be the longest and steepest grade I had seen in France I lay down beside the road for a rest.

Then I saw what I had been looking for—a pump! I found a sign on the pump stating in French that the water was not fit for drinking, but that did not stop me from bathing my feet, so I took off my shoes and sat on the top of the well, working the pump and holding my feet under the cool water. What a relief it was! The burning sensation left, I was revived to

a considerable extent and given courage to keep on, tired as I was.

I came upon a supply truck company billeted in the woods. It was just about mess time, and I took off my pack and rested until the company had been fed. I then went up to the mess sergeant and explained my troubles, and asked him for a hand-out. The meal of roast beef, spuds, string beans, rice pudding, bread, butter and lemonade that he gave me was a distinct surprise, up there so close to the front line, where it was often difficult for the boys to get enough hard tack and corned Willy.

I found an old friend who was in another company, and we talked for a while and took a good rest. We entered a big Chateau near by and found the building empty. I then left my pal and went on in search of my company. After hiking several kilos I turned off toward what I took to be an abandoned building, in which I found several Frenchmen busy cooking a meal on a dinky stove. I managed to make them understand that I wished to warm up my can of corned Willy. I soon had it sizzling in my mess kit. It is really good when properly prepared. I gave the Frenchmen some hard tack, and they gave me a cup of hot coffee. The French hard tack is more like a dog biscuit, and has to be soaked about five minutes before it can be eaten by anything less than a rock crusher.

The lines were not far away, and I could hear the guns booming away incessantly. I picked up my few belongings and started on my way, although I did not know whether it was right or wrong. But I was game, and covered several more kilos before night. About 9 p. m. I spotted a grain field on the left which looked like a good place for my night's lodging. I spread my shelter half on the ground, wrapped my two woolen blankets as tightly around my body as I could, spread my slicker over me, and went to sleep.

I slept twelve hours without opening my eyes once. I don't believe I could have found a better tonic than that night's rest. I rolled up my pack, strapped it on my back, and started off down the road, never dreaming that my company was less than an hour's walk from that wheat field. The commissary department reported that my reserve rations had all been consumed, but I discovered a chunk of stale bread in my rain coat pocket that satisfied my appetite for an hour or two.

The first man I met directed me down a road where I found a part of the 26th Division. They set me on the right track. I reached Division Headquarters about lunch time, and I decided it would pay me to linger until the Headquarters company had mess. I discovered several men from my company who had fallen out during the hike. The mess sergeant told us

to wait for a few minutes until the cook could prepare something for us. An old plow formed a convenient seat for me.

After we had eaten a guard was put over us, and we were told that Col. "Roaring Bill" Parker wanted to see us. I knew we were in for a lecture, for one of my comrades had told me what the colonel had said to him out on the road during the hike. The colonel came along in his luxurious touring car and noticed the man slowing down a little, and called him about everything that isn't in the dictionary, including "Yellow Belly" and worse.

They lined up fifteen of us and marched us over to Division Headquarters, where the colonel appeared, looking for all the world like a buck private just back from wire detail. His uniform was tattered, and he had no Sam Browne belt or a sign of shoulder strap to indicate his rank. While a number of French officers stood looking on, and American officers grinned at us from the windows, the famous Courtyard Lecture commenced.

I do not know how long it lasted. It consisted mostly of various forms of profanity. He called us deserters, yellow belied, cowards, etc., and informed us that the next time it happened he would see that we were kept in the front line trenches for six months straight, and that he would not wait for any slow moving court martial but would line us up and shoot us himself.

We were glad when a guard was assigned to escort us to our company, which was only a few hundred yards away. We were immediately ordered to report to the major. We left our packs in the woods with our company and started. The colonel followed us in his machine, and ordered the corporal to get us into squad formation instead of letting us string along the road. So we hopped into squad formation to the tune of the colonel's motor and advanced on the major's office.

Upon arriving at the major's office the colonel went inside, leaving us standing out in the hot sunshine. Our canteens were empty, and we slipped over one at a time to a well not far away where we drew buckets of exceptionally cold water with which we quenched our thirst and filled our canteens. After something over an hour the colonel appeared again and walked around us making some more remarks about drafted men not having the guts that his regulars had.

The major waited until the colonel was gone, and then came out and asked us one at a time just what our trouble was. We admired him for the way he talked to us. He said it was not customary to fall out while on the march to the front lines, and that we must all try not to let it happen again.

After making our way back to camp across the fields, I looked around for a suitable sleeping place. I made a nice soft bed on some straw under a large tree which would pro-

tect me somewhat from a rainstorm. We stayed there two days, cleaning our rifles, playing cards, shooting craps, and keeping under cover of the woods in the daytime so that the Boche aviators could not spot us, for discovery meant a bomb dropped from the sky or an artillery bombardment. The Germans had long range guns for such work, planted behind the hills twenty miles away.

Then orders came for us to move up into reserve, and at dusk we started on another long hike. My feet were still on the bum, and I had an awful time keeping up with my company. The sergeant kept telling me all the time to hurry up. I replied that I was doing my best. I had to watch for chuck holes in the road, for I would have fallen at the slightest stumble. An M. P. stood at a cross roads and directed us to some woods facing towards Chateau Thierry.

The woods were blacker than ink. We bumped into tree after tree, growled something about hard luck that we could not even see where we were going, until we reached a well concealed position. My pal and I cleared a little space of twigs and roots sticking out of the ground. It was a good thing for us that it did not rain that night, for we were all in.

The next morning we all went to work putting up a camouflage for our location. We gave particular attention to the mess kitchen, which we covered with trees and what loose brush we could find. No trees could be cut down except in a case of absolute necessity.

My pal and I pulled up what roots we had missed in the dark and pitched our tent, made out of two strips buttoned together. We had to be very careful when crawling into these tents, but once on my back I was soon asleep providing the shells were not coming too close for health.

We stayed there three days. A Y. M. C. A. man came around several times selling stuff. Whenever we saw him coming the whole company got into line, and the poor fellow at the end of the line had to wait for a long while and often could not get what he wanted after all.

A guard was posted all the time to keep every one under cover of the trees. We had to go nearly a mile for drinking water. We always went two at a time, with twenty or more canteens swinging from a long pole resting on our shoulders. Some marines kept busy digging trenches and putting up barbed wire entanglements so that if the Boche did break through we would be ready for him.

I was put on K. P. duty July 16th. I managed to get a little sleep now and then, in spite of occasional shells, the braying of the mules, or the swift flight of an aeroplane on its journey of destruction. The ground where I slept was very damp but it was the best that I was able to locate near by.

When orders came to advance we stopped about five kilos



behind the company. I visited the graves of two Americans killed by a bomb dropped by a Boche plane. We sent the food up in large Marremeat cans which kept the stuff hot for some time if the lids were screwed on tightly. The mess sergeant always went with the ration cart to see that it was delivered to the right men. It took at least five hours to make the round trip over the shell swept road, and more than one detail never came back at all. That one trip gave the boys all the hot food they got for that day.

We sent up all the food we could, because none of us knew when the drive would start. We made 800 doughnuts in one day. Several times steaks and stew came back to us turned green by gas, so that we had to bury it immediately.

I made the trip one night with a water cart as extra driver. If anything had happened to the driver it would have been up to me to go ahead alone. There was not water supply out where the boys were, and the precious fluid was worth its weight in gold many times over to a fellow lying wounded on the field of battle, with an empty canteen and fever rising.

They were under constant shell fire, mostly gas. They had to keep their masks on for hours at a time, and they never had any peace. They dug holes in the ground for protection from shrapnel and machine gun bullets. As we made our way up to them along the shell swept road we never knew but that the next one had our name and number on it.

As we passed one of our batteries hidden in the woods alongside the road, all the guns were fired almost together, and the noise was terrific. The flash nearly blinded us, so that we could not see the road for some time. The mules, frightened by the roar and flash of the guns, tore down the road at break-neck speed with the driver doing his best to stop them. I hung on blindly to the tool box in the rear. The cart seemed to hit every shell hole in the road, but I stayed with it, and was there at the finish. It took us half an hour to empty our precious load into the barrels which were buried in the ground beside the road.

Several men that I knew came to fill their canteens while I was there, they could only come out at night, as they were close enough to the front lines, to be seen in the day time. There was no water available for washing even if the shells had stopped falling long enough to give them time to think about such luxuries. They were a tired and haggard looking bunch. Some of them had been able to sleep a little in the fox holes which they dug to escape the shells; others had not had any rest for days.

On our return trip the battery beside the road waited until we were close to them, and then they whispered something to the Kaiser that started the mules on another wild run, but this time we were headed toward camp. Shells were piled six feet

high alongside the road, all covered with brush, so there was not much danger of us getting off the road. The mess sergeant met us before we reached camp, wanting to know if everything was O. K. I was certainly tired after that ride, which had Paul Revere's ride skinned a mile for speed and ducking G. I. cans, and I beat it for my pup tent out on the damp ground, where I sawed wood until they shook me up at noon.

July 14 the Red Cross man came along and gave us chocolate, cigarettes and writing paper, of which I had none left, as I had been writing a good many letters. We could not buy anything in that vicinity, as the Y. M. C. A. men seldom came around, and they had very little if any stock left.

A motorized machine gun battalion camped near us in the woods. They were used as hole pluggers, rushing here and there where the Boche threatened to break through. They used Ford cars, and they were always at the right place at the right time. I wrote several letters the day before our company went over the top, which was at five o'clock in the morning, July 18. I did not expect many chances to write while the drive was on. The boys advanced behind a heavy barrage, and must have surprised the Germans, for those who did not start for Berlin on the double came our direction yelling "Kamerad" and clawing the cobwebs off the milky way. Large batches of prisoners streamed down the road all day. Some of them had been merely stripped of their arms and told to hit the trail for the prison camp.

The Americans never hesitated to shoot a German who did not have his hands straight up. Many of them were very treacherous. A favorite trick was to advance with a small grenade bomb in their fists, throwing it when sure of a mark. Dozens of them were shot when these bombs were found in their possession.

The next morning the kitchen was ordered to advance to some woods far in advance of the place where the company had gone over the top. As we were passing through the ruins of a little village, a messenger from our company ran his bicycle into an officer's horse. Both the bicycle and the horse were making extra good time, but no serious damage was done. I ran over and picked up the runner and helped him get started again, and then rejoined the kitchen detail.

I noticed a tall tree with a rope ladder running up to the top, where a comfortable chair, neatly camouflaged, had provided an observation post from which the country could be seen for miles. An officer with a good pair of field glasses could get a lot of valuable information from such a post. Of course he had to keep absolutely quiet in the daytime.

At last the driver turned the kitchen up a narrow road where we had to help it over the ruts now and then, until we were well back from the road. We got busy with a couple of axes

and cleared a space of brush and stumps. Then we disconnected the two parts of the kitchen, or rather the pantry from the kitchen, bracing the sections on their two wheels so that they would not tip over. We prepared the food in the pantry and did the cooking in the kitchen. We set them on opposite sides of the road so that it was only a step from one to the other. When the meat supply ran short we resorted to stew, so that it would go around.

After spreading my blankets on the ground under a large tree I went exploring with the rest of the detail. The woods had been fought over just the day before, and they were full of equipment thrown away by the advancing Americans. They discarded everything when they went over the top except reserve rations, helmet, gas mask, rifle, ammunition both in belt and in an extra handolier of 100 cartridges thrown over the shoulder.

I found a new Springfield rifle and gave it to a man who had lost his off the kitchen, to which he had strapped it to save carrying it. From the edge of the woods we looked out on an open field where we could see several duds—unexploded shells—but there were no bodies in sight. We had expected to find some, as we had heard that a number of the boys had been killed.

When we returned to the kitchen we learned that orders had been received for another move after nightfall. It was only 4 p. m., so we had some time to wait. After getting everything ready to move on a minute's notice we made our way to a small farm house to get some drinking water. On the way we learned that two of our boys were lying near by where they had been killed. I went over to see if I could identify the bodies.

One was a corporal from my company. His forehead had been split by a large piece of shrapnel. I noticed that some one had taken his automatic. The other boy was one of my pals. Apparently a piece of shrapnel had struck his bayonet scabbard, for it was bent almost double. A dozen letters were scattered about on the ground, still unopened, mute as to the suddenness of the order which had sent him to his death. One of his arms and a leg had been torn off, by a high explosive shell, I was told.

The time for the kitchen to advance was near at hand. As I went on to a farmhouse where I could get good drinking water, I noticed a great red flare far to the east, which I took to be an ammunition dump set on fire by the retreating Boche. As the Americans had captured a number of their guns, the enemy tried to destroy the shells they were unable to use.

We started forward with the kitchen about 9 p. m., July 19th, up over a long hill, topped by the ruins of a little village through which the Boche line had run for a time. There was a story in circulation that the Boche cooked here in the daytime,

and that the Americans cooked that night in the same place.

The road through the village was badly cut up by shell fire. Many trees hit by shells had fallen across the road, blocking it until the engineers arrived. They kept busy during the drive keeping the roads open for traffic. Filling the shell holes with crushed rock was a big task.

Nearly every building in the next village we came to had been entirely demolished, and those which had not been wrecked by exploding shells showed great holes where duds had passed through. However, the railroad bridge in this town had not been damaged. Most of the trees had been killed by the gas, so the scene was far from attractive.

We passed through a number of these small villages, and saw several bodies lying on the ground, apparently snipers and machine gunners left behind in a vain attempt to stop the advance. Most of these fellows got what they deserved. Their favorite stunt was to keep on shooting until they saw themselves in danger and then cry *Kamerad*.

When about three kilos from the front line where the Americans were resting the mess sergeant returned reporting that the boys were in some woods, and got ready for business by disconnecting the kitchen.

We found the woods full of small dugouts, about three feet under ground in solid clay, so we knew there was no danger of their caving in. My pal and I could not find any cooties, so we spread out our blankets in one of them and were soon sound asleep, in spite of the exceptionally heavy barrage with which the Boche was trying to check our advance.

The mess sergeant soon received orders for a hot meal, all we could send, as it had been four days since the company had had a hot meal. All the boys had to eat in that time was the reserve rations in their packs. We were all on the job at once. We kept the stove full of wood and soon had the coffee boiling. The canned corn, of which we had a large quantity, and the corned Willy were soon hot, the bread was cut, everything loaded on to the ration cart, and the mess sergeant and the driver were off.

As our division was waiting for relief, they merely held the Boche in check and watched for a counter attack. After an hour's search the company was located, and the food was distributed, not without difficulty, however, as the Boche machine gunners were not far away ready to pick off any one who carelessly exposed himself to view.

When the mess sergeant returned he reported that the boys were all worn out by the eight days of constant strain, hardly any sleep even at night, when their only protection was usually the fox holes they dug for themselves. Five men had been killed by one shell which dropped into the trench in which they were standing.



We found many heaps of ammunition scattered through the woods, covered with grass to camouflage them from low-flying aeroplanes. As for equipment, most anything could be had from a messkit to a suit of clothes. In some of the dugouts I came across women's shoes and clothing.

Our greatest difficulty was the scarcity of water. The country had been entirely devastated while in the possession of the Boche, especially the wells, most of which had been poisoned. The water in every well had to be analyzed before it could be used for drinking.

I was sent out with the driver of our water cart to a destination unknown, as our orders were merely, "Go get some water." Making our way with great difficulty over and around the pits left by thousands of exploding shells to the nearest village site, where once a dozen happy homes had stood, we found the water in the well unfit for drinking.

We went on for about a mile through some woods formerly held by the Boche to a farmhouse which resembled a fort, on account of the heavy stone wall surrounding it. We found the well dry at this place. There were a number of French soldiers resting in the house. They were a funny looking lot on account of the odd sizes of the men. Several of them were at least fifty years old, others not yet twenty-five. The tall ones carried short rifles and the short ones long rifles. We saw several graves beside the road where Boches had been buried.

It was nearly dark by this time. The mules were well nigh starved and very tired, so our progress to the next village was decidedly slow. We found some Americans billeted in a stone building. We saw a large pond here, but we could not use the water. On we went to the next village, where we filled our fifty gallon tank with good clear water drawn in a bucket from a well.

In opening a box of prunes (we called them "army cherries") I discovered that the box was put up by my uncle who used to run a packing house at Los Gatos, California, which is my home town.

We had to wear our helmets all the time and our gas masks at alert. The helmets worn by the Boche were almost twice the weight of ours.

After being at this place a couple of days we were ordered to fall back about three kilos. We reached the place in about four hours, and hastily camouflaged everything with brush and trees. We had no orders to cook a meal, so we looked over the position a little. The place was one taken by my company in the drive. Soon after we started out on our souvenir hunt we found a patch of bushes which had made an excellent position for a machine gun nest.

The first thing I picked up was some canteen paper money which was issued to the soldiers in advance and charged

against his pay. These checks enabled the soldier to purchase necessities at the army canteens. I sent home three bills, of one, two, and four marks. At the other end of the patch of bushes I found a machine gun pit dug in the ground, about four feet deep. The gunner had stood in this pit, ready to sweep the country for miles with his machine gun.

Every fifth bullet was explosive, making a very nasty wound when it struck one. The belts carried 200 cartridges, the longest that I had seen. The belts were provided with hooks at the end, so that a never-ending stream of cartridges could be fed into the gun. The French shosho guns used by my company could fire only twenty cartridges at a time, then another holder had to be inserted.

My friend picked up an American automatic which had been struck by a piece of shrapnel. The fragment had cut into the chamber in such a way that the trigger could not be pulled. We found several dead Germans lying where they had fallen four days before. They had turned black. The helmets of two of them could be seen peeking over the edge of a shell hole. They were no doubt machine gunners who fired until the Americans were close up and then tried the "Kamerad" stunt. But as they had killed many of the Americans and wounded others all they got was three of four bayonets in the ribs.

Another Boche stood in a trench with his hands in the air. He had been shot through the heart. The following day fifteen of these bodies were collected and buried in a large shell hole.

We slept out on the bare ground at this place. Two days after moving we moved back, and after a stop of half a day we again moved forward.

A battery of six French long range guns about a kilo from us made the ground tremble every few minutes, and we could hear the shells shrieking through the air. Their range was twenty-two kilos. As the boys advanced, these guns had to be moved forward, those from the rear going to the front before stopping.

I counted eighteen observation balloons, the eyes of the artillery, in a straight line about ten kilos long. They had a fleet of aeroplanes to protect them from the Boche aviators, who tried to get close enough to shoot them down with explosive bullets, setting the balloons on fire and compelling the observer to leap for his life in a parachute.

I discovered a three inch rapid fire gun abandoned by the Boche. It had been neatly covered with straw. The barrel was all that I could see.

Returning to the kitchen we found orders for a hot meal to be sent up to the lines as soon as possible. The water tank was empty, so I started out with the driver to hunt for water.

There had been some heavy fighting here. I saw several Germans lying where they had been killed. The sides of the road were honeycombed with small dugouts where they had lived like rats, with just room to lie down. Further up the road I saw a large grave containing the bodies of twenty men from the 26th Division who had been killed by French shells. I looked at each of the little wooden crosses to make sure that none of my company were buried there.

To one side lay a little village which had been nearly demolished by the retreating Boche. A party of French engineers was clearing the wreckage from the streets so that the traffic could pass. By saying "Delooh" and pointing to the tank I made them understand I wanted water, and they directed me to the town washhouse where we filled our tank in about ten minutes with a small pump which the French had installed for our benefit. The water was very good.

As we left the village we had a steep hill to climb. The mules were tired, and I got off and pushed all I could. While we rested at the top some French ammunition carts came along loaded with shells for the front. We met a large batch of Boche prisoners in charge of an M. P. on horseback. They followed wherever he went. They were some sorry looking lot. None of them had had a shave or a bath for weeks, and their clothing was no more than rags. Their leader, who did not look much like a German to me, was a good six feet six inches tall. As they passed the Frenchman who was driving stopped and stood up, griting his teeth and shaking his fist at them.

When we reached the kitchen we emptied the tank into our three big double boilers and one single one. Orders came for another move the next day. When we started out after water we found some in half an hour, but the stream from the faucet here was so small that it would have taken us all day to fill the tank. Some intelligence officers were examining fifteen prisoners in the courtyard, going through their pockets in search of information of value. One of them could talk English. When asked if he thought the war was going to last much longer he replied that he did not know. Some of them were eating some food out of cans. One fellow threw away half a can, and one of the officers remarked that food must be plentiful in Germany.

We started for a place about ten kilos distant where I knew the water was plentiful and good. We were gone six hours, and the mess sergeant was angry. I explained that my orders were to get water, and that I had obeyed my orders.

Our division was relieved soon after that. We moved to the rear under cover of darkness, after preparing a good hot meal. When we reached the company we found only fifty-five left of the 200 who started in the drive. All the rest were

either killed or wounded. They certainly looked tired after that ten days of hell. We gave them all they wanted of everything.

I was completely worn out myself. I slept with two of my pals who were without shelter. They had discarded their packs during the drive so that their movement would not be hindered. One of these two boys, named Manning, was killed later in the St. Mehiel drive.

I was kept on the water wagon job during the rest that followed. I met the Colonel one morning. He seemed to be in good humor, saying "Good morning" when I saluted. He certainly must have had a grouch on that day he bawled me out for falling out of the hike.

The watering place was some grand mud hole. I had to walk through mud over my shoe tops to fill the bucket from a small stream running out of the hillside. It was near a large tunnel on the main railroad line. The entrance to the tunnel had been closed by American artillery fire, so that the Boche could not retreat through it. The rails had been dynamited, making extensive repairs necessary before the Allies could use it for hauling supplies, and to bring up the big long range naval guns on flat cars which could be readily moved from place to place, fooling the Boche gunners who were trying to get the range.

These naval guns threw a large projectile twenty-five kilos and kept the Boche on the run. Large heaps of ammunition led us to believe the Boche had plenty of ammunition instead of the scarcity reported. Several shells had come over made of all sorts of material such as aluminum, glass, brass and copper. Many of their shells failed to explode.

We started for our rest camp August 2nd. We passed through mile after mile of war torn country, where we were hindered in our march by the shell holes in the roads. We had to help the mules pull the kitchen more than once. We went to the rear by the same road up which we had advanced, marching until we were tired, and then resting a while. We soon got out of range of the Boche guns, and it was a wonderful relief to get back where all we could hear was a noise far behind us not unlike the booming of distant surf.

As we passed through a small village a Frenchman came out with a bucket of water which was a lifesaver for many of us. There was a pump nearby, but we were not allowed to stop until we reached the top of the hill. I found a box of trench pastry in one of the boilers and satisfied my hunger. The march was resumed after a brief rest. We had to block the wheels going down several hills, as there were no brakes on the kitchen trucks, and the mules could never hold them back.

After staying three days in the identical place where we had prepared for the drive, we passed on through a little village



where our first dressing station had been located in the church, and up over the hill on the way to our rest camp. My teeth were beginnig to bother me. The bridge work had been worn out on both sides by the hard tack.

We had regular hours in the rest camp, reveille at 6 a. m. and taps at 9 p. m. We were given plenty of time for recreation, and we played baseball, cards, and other games. Some of us who were lucky were allowed to visit the nearest large town where they could get a good home-cooked meal in a French home. The women treated us fine, serving wine wherever we went, as the water was undrinkable.

I wrote home that I would be lucky if I came back from the war, and received a note from my mother acknowledging the receipt of a check from the government, the ten dollar allotment that was to start in January. I had expected the government to add at least ten dollars to my ten. I urged every one at home to go the limit on the Fourth Liberty Loan, as I had seen things and knew that the government needed the money to equip and feed the boys on the line and the others on the way, for a boy can not do much fighting with no ammunition and a wooden gun and with his stomach empty. I had been in twice and come out without a scratch, although I had been so badly frightened at times that I had forgotten to pray for the good health of my folks at home and for my own safety.

Up to this time I had not yet seen a tank. I had heard how they wiped out the Boche machine gun nests, nothing stopping them but direct hits by heavy artillery, usually fatal to the crew of two or three men.

I received a good conduct pass August 6th and went to the nearest village with another member of the kitchen detail. We walked down a path to the main road running toward Chateau Thierry. There were plenty of auto trucks passing. We flagged the first one and got a ride to La Ferte, a good sized town where we could get almost anything by paying an exorbitant price. Two small green pears cost one and one half francs, four small but fairly good peaches, two francs; a fist full of grapes, two francs; two small oranges, one franc. I could have bought the whole lot for twenty cents in New York.

We saw many things which were used extensively in the army, such as sweet potatoes (canned), all varieties of evaporated vegetables, brought to their normal size by two to three hours soaking in water. They came in fifteen pound cans, convenient for keeping part if we did not use the whole can at one time. Potatoes came in two different forms—small cubes and thin slices for frying. Karo corn syrup made a hit with the boys—some of them were wild over it, spreading it on their bread every time they could get it. I often served three and four ten pound cans to the company for one meal.

Our coffee was excellent. Oleomargarine was the best substitute for butter. It would not keep very long, so when we managed to get a surplus we flavored our boiled spuds and carrots with it.

I had a dandy place for my sleeping tent. My pal and I covered the ground with six inches of straw and made a fine bed.

August 7th the rain came down in torrents. After a hard day's work I crawled into my tent to rest and write a letter or two. I did not dare touch the canvass, as that made it leak. The boys from Connecticut received money that day from the Spanish War Veterans, and I began to wonder if California was getting up some benefit for the boys from that state. I decided that she must be holding it up her sleeve until we got home.

I had the afternoon off August 9th. There was no laundry to which we could send our soiled clothes, and I spent the afternoon boiling and washing my clothes, using plenty of soap. I was sure I killed all the cooties that time. But no matter how well we cleaned up they were always just as bad the next day, and the only way to keep them from crawling away with us was to get the shirt reading habit, and do the once over every day.

The next day I sent home imprints of the different coins I happened to have in my pocket. The old copper five centime piece had been superseded by a new one made of aluminum with a hole punched in the center. The ten centime piece was a little larger, with a hole in its center. The twenty-five centime piece was a little larger than the franc.

We were told that the coins were called in to get the copper for shells and parts of the big guns, and to do away with the confusing of twenty-five centime pieces with francs. The holes in the ten centime pieces helped to distinguish them. At one time there were five different coins in circulation in France, (five) England, Belgium, Switzerland, France, and sunny Italy, and the five coins all had equal purchasing value in all of the five countries mentioned.

I received a watch from my brother. I could not make it run for some time until I discovered that the minute hand was striking the second hand at the tip. I sent my mother a small silk handkerchief with a letter for her birthday.

August 18th our regimental band played for the boys in the village. Listening to music is certainly more soothing to the nerves than ducking shells. I heated water for a nice hot bath over the coals in the mess kitchen. We had moved into a house in the village, and I had a dandy straw bed in a room where there was a stone floor and a fireplace.

I had got the smoking habit by this time, like all the other boys. I liked the French wine, but the beer was rotten. I was firmly convinced that my number was not on any of the

Kaiser's shells. The weather was very warm so that I did not mind sleeping out in the open.

The dentist was working on my teeth so that they bothered the life out of me every time I ate. I changed my insurance papers so that my father would get \$3,000 and my mother \$7,000 in case anything happened to me while in the service.

There were not many aeroplanes to be seen around our rest camp, we were far behind the lines, away from the continuous shell fire and strain. We did not get many newspapers there, as the village in the vicinity were not reached by a railroad. The nearest railroad station was twenty kilos from us.

Nearly all the people remaining in the village were elderly people who toiled all day in the fields, I noticed one woman who must have been at least eighty, cutting hay like a young chicken.

We were paid August 24th. A little Frog, well into his fourth summer, came along while I was drawing water from our cart to make Java. His shoes were in tatters, especially the backs. I picked up a nail and sewed them up as well as I could with some heavy twine, so that they at least kept his feet off the ground. I do not claim to be an expert shoemaker when the tools of the trade are on hand, but I made that little shaver happy.

A member of my company was sent back to the States August 24th, on account of the dependency of his wife and two children. He had been sent over to France through some error and had been to the front twice.

The town pump went dry, and I had to haul water from a spring beyond the next village. The water was exceptionally clean and cool. The town crier was making his rounds as we passed through. He assembled the villagers by beating a drum and then announced the latest dope on the war or anything of interest or importance.

We spent several days on the road until we reached some dark woods about two o'clock of a very dark morning. The road was well supplied with shell holes which hindered us a good deal. We stopped one day, and then took another fifteen kilo hike. I had had almost no sleep for two days and could hardly keep up with the kitchen. We had been taking turns sleeping on top of the kitchen while on the march. When it came my turn I was soon asleep, with my head hanging over the fire box. The link connecting the front to the rear slipped out, and I took a complete somersault in the air and landed on my feet. As soon as I got my eyes open and realized what had happened I ran down the road to stop the driver, who did not know that he had lost an important part of his load.

While on the march the ration cart always followed the kitchen. Whenever we got hungry I grabbed a loaf of bread and cut it up. Sometimes we had jam, or olemargine, too.

When we reached our destination we found that part of the

division had already arrived, and a number of kitchens were set up in the woods, which looked very much like a village soon after dark, with nothing to be seen but a few lights here and there. After placing our own kitchen we looked around for a good place to sleep. We slept from three o'clock in the morning until nine. Soon after a hasty breakfast of coffee and bread, we were all treated to a general bawling out of the officers by our friend the colonel, known intimately as "Roaring Bill." He said that we should have camouflaged the kitchens with trees, and then reminded us all that the French did not want any more trees cut than was absolutely necessary.

Two days later we moved to a better location one kilo nearer the front. That was the shortest and perhaps the slowest hike I ever took. We spent five hours doing little more than wait for orders to move on another hundred yards, but we finally arrived, unhitched the mules and put them in their corral, and then all hands returned to the kitchen. I don't think I ever swore so much in all the rest of my life as I did the next hour. We had to work the kitchen into a clump of bushes. It wasn't the lifting and pulling and pushing that worried us. The bushes were equipped with long thorns which made us forget about all the barbed wire ever invented. We had to get the job done, too, before we could get any sleep. I slept where I dropped until wakened by the mess sergeant who told me to hustle some water. I had to go back eight kilos.

September 8th, just after I had finished cutting five 10 pound tins of bacon, the knife slipped while I was skinning the rind and nearly finished a finger for me. Our first aid man fixed it up with iodine and a bandage which I soon lost, as I kept right on with my work.

The French were busy placing long range guns along the road and camouflaging them overhead so that they could not be spotted from aeroplanes, doing everything at night, of course. It rained every day, with regular cloudbursts between showers. Two of us fixed up a pup tent with the mess sergeant. We put several empty sacks on the ground first of all, covering them with three wool blankets, leaving three more for cover.

Just before mess one day we went over to the extra fireplace dug in the ground to get a large boiler of coffee. Before we carried it thirty feet the clouds seemed to burst, and we were soaked to the skin before we could reach cover. Luckily I had extra sox and underwear. I dried my shoes as well as I could over the fireplace.

Orders came for us to move towards the front September 12th. The company left about nightfall, followed by the kitchen about an hour later. We advanced four kilos through the woods. The mud was the thickest I had ever seen. After a few hundred yards we would stop to rest. I threw myself on the ground beside the road to get a wink or two of sleep every time I got a



chance, as I did not know when I would get another good night's rest. After much delay we found our location in the woods and darkness and rainfall. We unloaded our supplies and piled them on the ground under the large canvas cover which we carried for protecting our flour, sugar, and such provisions, and then went dugout hunting.

I found our officers and a few men in a little dugout. They were a funny sight all piled in there together. It was two o'clock by that time. I used my helmet as a chair, because the floor was very damp, told the gas guard to call me at four o'clock, leaned back against a post, and slept till he woke me. We had to keep our gas masks at alert all the time, for we never knew when gas shells would be dropped on us.

We carried the cans of bacon into a dugout, where we used an empty box as a cutting table. The water cart had gone for water, but failed to return, and the boys did not get any coffee that morning. They were bitterly disappointed, as there is no better tonic on a cold morning than hot coffee. We cut the bread by the flashes of the big guns, which were throwing a terrific barrage over on the Boche. Nevertheless, we had to be very careful with our fire while we cooked the bacon. We covered the firebox with wet sacks.

We rested all that day. At nightfall the company was ordered forward into a village which was under constant shell fire. The kitchen followed. Two of us were left behind to guard the supplies until the return of the ration cart which had gone to the rear to draw our daily allowance. The kitchen had gone on when the ration cart reached the village, so the driver went on in the wake of the company and followed it around while the drive was on.

Our orders were to stay with the supplies until we were sent for, so we stuck, while the boys went ahead and helped to capture Mont Sec, on the Toul front. The Americans surrounded the hill, forcing the Boche to evacuate. Soon after they captured a little village a long train rolled in bearing several carloads of ammunition, a complete brass band, and several carloads of reinforcements for the front lines. The 26th Division took them all prisoners after a sharp fight.

In the meantime my pal and I were guarding the supplies left in our charge. After waiting all day for the ration cart to come we dined on bread and water. I tried to sleep sitting on a box of corned Willy, with a couple of sacks thrown over my shoulders, but the night was too cold. The next morning we discovered the most comfortable dugout that I had ever been in, containing chairs, tables, bunks, and best of all, a large fireplace with a large exit for smoke.

We lost no time moving in the supplies, which included 45 loaves of bread, 100 pounds flour, 150 pounds spuds, fifty pounds carrots, 50 pounds of bacon fat obtained by trying out our bacon

before the kitchen left, sugar, and coffee. Our menu that day included samples of about everything, and we wound up with hot cakes and fried bread.

We crawled out of bed the next morning at 6:30, and soon had some spuds peeled and fried in a tremendous frying pan we discovered there. We did not care how hard it rained, as we had plenty of wood to keep the fire roaring.

The next day, Sunday, turned out to be a glorious day. We could not find a line of reading matter anywhere. Newspapers were scarcer than hen's teeth. We rose at 8:30 that morning, and feasted on fried spuds and toast, washing them down with most excellent Java. We had everything our own way, going to bed and getting up when we felt like it. My pal was lucky enough to pick up a deck of cards which helped us to pass the time away.

We spent September 16 exploring the dugouts in the vicinity. They were occupied by the French before the drive commenced. One of the dugouts was at least fifty feet deep and very dark, so that we had to feel our way around very cautiously, I washed my clothes in a shell hole and took a much needed bath, after boiling the water to make sure there was no gas in it.

When we ran out of drinking water we hiked four kilos to the nearest village where we filled our canteens and a couple of large cans. We found a company of engineers laying a railroad towards the front, on which supplies and ammunition could be carried forward. They were colored troops, and a happier crowd was nowhere to be found. Soon after we returned to the dugout my throat began to get sore. I gargled it with the best thing I could think of—salt and water.

Our alarm clock had not yet appeared, so we slept until eleven the next morning. We needed the rest, and we took advantage of the opportunity. The rain encouraged us to stay inside where it was dry and warm. Writing, playing cards and eating kept us busy. We had not seen a newspaper for a week, and the only news we had received of anything we had to pry from roaming Frenchmen we met while strolling in the woods.

The lieutenant and the supply sergeant came after us September 19th. We loaded the supplies which were left on the ration cart. All the bread had to be thrown away as it had begun to mold. We had eaten all the potatoes, and some of the other stuff would have been used up if we had stayed there much longer. We had collected a number of souvenirs in the dugouts, but the lieutenant was angry because they had had to come after us, and he made us discard everything that we did not really need. I managed to smuggle three blankets onto the cart when he was not looking. He made us carry our packs on our backs.

We left all the soap with the commissary sergeant in the nearest village. When the lieutenant went ahead on horseback, we

laid our packs and rifles on the back of the cart. We soon passed the old front line trenches. At one of the cross roads we saw a skull lying where a shell had disturbed some one's grave. Quantities of Boche equipment which had been thrown away during the retreat lay alongside the road. We saw graves here and there, and many elaborate dugouts fitted up with glass windows by the Germans during their long stay. They used large sheets of steel which they struck with a hammer for gas alarms.

In one village we found a party of Frenchmen placing an observation balloon to aid in keeping tab on enemy movements. In another village we learned that a number of our boys had been killed there the day before by a shell. They were working on the road filling shell holes at the time.

We saw a Frenchman washing his clothes in a water hole. He seemed to be contented and happy, even in those gloomy surroundings. We took our time on the long grade just beyond, as the lieutenant was far ahead. Now and then a shell went whizzing over our heads on its mission of death and destruction.

We found a French battery around the turn at the top of the hill barking away at the Boche, three kilos away. They had plenty of shells piled up alongside the road. Our kitchen stood near by, rather scantily camouflaged amidst the trees. The mess sergeant was surprised to see us. After a hasty meal we were sent down the hill again with the water tank. We soon had the tank filled, and then took our time on the return trip.

We pitched our tent near the kitchen that night, but my pal did not like the continual booming and barking of the guns, so he went dugout hunting in the morning. He located a large dugout, the headquarters of our regimental band, fifty feet underground, where nothing could be heard except the explosion of a shell near the entrance.

I stayed outside alone several nights, but I began to get a little scared myself out there in the pup tent sometimes, especially when I could hear the motors of the Boche bombers humming overhead, and I began to wonder how I would look if they dropped one in my front yard.

We were about two kilos from the front lines. From our position we could see a level plain about six kilos wide, half of it still held by the Boche. We could see Boche ammunition factories working full blast. We did not shell them because, we did not want to kill the Belgian, French, and American prisoners working there.

An Austrain 88 gun gave us a lot of trouble. We could not hear the shells coming, and we had no time to duck. It shelled the woods every day, remaining quiet for a while and then throwing over four or five in rapid succession, sending us scamp-ering to whatever shelter we could find.

One day while I was busy cutting bacon, and the company

was lined up for mess, one of these shells landed about forty feet from the kitchen. It did not explode until it had buried itself in the ground, and the dirt went straight up into the air. No one was hurt. When the dust cleared away I found myself flat on the ground. The place was deserted in about three seconds.

When we finally served the meal only ten men were allowed to come up to the kitchen at a time. We did everything we could to camouflage our smoke.

High explosive shells burst overhead frequently, throwing out buck shot in all directions. A piece of metal missed me just five feet one day. I had replaced the cover after stirring the stew and stepped back, when bing! said piece of the shell hit the cover of the kettle. Several mules were killed near the kitchen by a shell which dropped among them.

Another day, soon after I had finished taking a bath out of a large can, a large shell landed where I had been for the last half hour. They seemed to be getting the range, and it was not long before we were ordered up closer to the lines where we had better protection and a dugout in which to sleep.

After packing everything onto the carts we moved out of the protection of the woods. It was after night, and the road was camouflaged by a high brush fence, so that the Boche could not have seen us from their lines. The most dangerous spot, where shells landed frequently, was a steep grade where we had to block the wheels with long poles run between the spokes. After we had made the sharp turn at the bottom in safety, the plateau lay before us.

[We backed the kitchen into a safe place and unloaded the supplies, covering the kitchen with large trees to scatter the smoke. The next job was a trip with the water cart. I had to walk over a hundred feet through mud over my shoe tops to get to the water, and I had to feel my way to the spring, the night was so dark.

After filling the coffee boilers from the tank, we looked around the dugout for quarters. It was built about ten feet under the surface of the road, with several passageways running out of it to other dugouts. It must have been the Boche headquarters in that sector. Some of the passages were 400 feet long. The passage running to the Red Cross first aid station was very damp. The first chance I had the next morning I made a block for that passage out of a large potato sack and strips of wood.

The doorway to the dugout was less than four feet high, so we had to almost crawl into it. By night I had everything fairly comfortable. I had a box to sit on while reading or writing. "Canned Heat" provided warmth. For a bed I spread several sacks on the board floor, covered them with one



blanket, and then covered myself with three blankets and my rain coat.

I never undressed at night, for we never knew what minute we would be routed out by a gas alarm or orders to move. I kept my gas mask and helmet right by my head ready for instant use at all times. The company was scattered along the lines in platoons, each of which sent a food detail for each meal, provided the shell fire did not prevent. The food was carried as usual in large cans.

I was up against it for cans until I made some out of 10 pound bacon tins, hammering down the rough edges at the top so the boys would not cut their hands. I fitted each can with a handle made out of heavy wire. I kept plenty of boiling hot water, very soapy, for washing the cans, and towels to wipe them dry. We used all the flour and sugar sacks for towels.

We made doughnuts whenever we could get the flour, some days three or four for each boy. The bread came in 5 pound loaves, enough for ten boys. We served jam when we got enough to go around.

The plateau was a grand sight in the daytime, when we could see everything that was going on. There was a concrete pill box on top of our dugout which must have held a machine gun or two during the drive. A big vegetable garden near by was visited every night by some of the boys. The Boche must have been wise, for he plowed the place every night with all kinds of shells. I could hear the shells coming from the inside of the dugout, and they always seemed to be coming straight for me.

On clear days we could see dozens of aeroplanes, many of them maneuvering to get pictures of any place that looked different or suspicious. Our anti-aircraft guns were always barking away at them, and once in a while we sent them back in a hurry. We had to keep on the watch for planes, and keep well under the trees so that we would not be seen.

The country was well nigh desolate. None of the farmers had come back. For weeks I did not hear or see anything of a cow or a hen. How I longed to hear a rooster crow again!

We found an elaborate power station in one dugout, from which the Boche had provided electricity for lights in different places, through power lines running along the ground. I woke up one morning with an itch which I blamed on the cooties, but the Doc said I had the German itch. I believed him. A day or so later I developed a large boil behind my ear down there in our Half Way to Hell Hotel, and after the Doc finished lancing said boil I had another count against the Boche.

I found my glasses broken the morning of October 2nd. My pal must have stepped on my blouse while I was asleep. I

managed to find time the next day to wash all my clothes and take a much needed bath. The next day was one to remember, for a K. C. man came around and gave us cigarettes, tobacco, and chocolate, free of charge. There was no Y. M. C. A. near us.

October 6th I woke up with sharp pains in the muscles above my knee. The Doc gave me aspirin tablets to take every four hours and told me to rest a while. The weather was very cold. The next day I was no better, hardly able to crawl around and pack up my belongings before the ambulance arrived to take me to the hospital. Every seat was taken by men who had been wounded or gassed, and I had to stand on one foot, trying to save my bum leg. The pain was terrible.

The road seemed all shell holes, and every little while a shell or two whizzed by overhead to give the engineers some more trouble on down the road. We found the first aid station nice and warm. It was located in a half-ruined church. They examined me carefully and sent me on in another ambulance. The boys who had been burned by gas were put on tables and scrubbed with hot water to relieve the pain. All my equipment was left on a salvage pile.

The ride to the field hospital was made with great difficulty, on account of the heavy rain. We skidded from one side of the road to the other and back again, but we finally arrived without any upsets. After a good sleep that night I rode twenty kilos further to Evacuation Hospital No. 6, near the old Verdun front.

It was a clear day. I managed to get the end seat so that I could ease my leg from the continual jarring. We passed through the old Boche artillery positions, all of which had been well camouflaged, where equipment lay in heaps alongside the road. I saw a number of soldiers in one large village which had either escaped destruction or had been repaired quickly. The road was smooth after this, and we made a good forty miles an hour for a while. We passed by a camouflaged fence at least five kilos long. The road here could be seen twenty miles away on a clear day from the Boche observation balloons. Soon after passing a French hospital we arrived at our destination.

I was able to walk into the hospital along with a number of our wounded, besides a bunch of German and Austrain wounded. Most of the stretcher bearers were prisoners. They were very careful in handling all litter cases, as many of them were very badly wounded. They took down all my history and then assigned me to a ward. The bed was the softest I had seen in France.

My company was nearly wiped out soon after I left it by machine gun fire. While in the hospital I learned that only

eight men were left. I saw 300 aeroplanes go over that day. They were flying in V-shaped battle formation, and certainly must have made a big hole in the Boche morale. The man who can face an aeroplane flying at him with a machine gun firing three hundred bullets a minute without running for a dugout is decidedly rare. A moving aeroplane is very hard to hit, and it takes a direct hit to damage them.

I was sent to Base Hospital 26 October 11th, where an X-ray showed pus pockets on my leg, caused by some injury, they told me. They cut into the pus pockets October 19th, and inserted a row of drainage tubes. I was in bed there until November 20th, when I was carried aboard an American Red Cross train. I was glad when I saw it was American, because the French carried wounded in box cars and gave little or no attention to a man who could not take care of himself.

I stayed three and one-half months in Base Hospital 8 at Savenay. I went through "Marble Hall" (the operating room) twice. When we were told the armistice had been signed all I could do was shed a few tears, for I was flat on my back and nearly all my pals were dead.

Fortunately I had a little money with me. The French woman in charge of the diet kitchen bought eggs for me in the village, at six francs a dozen. We feasted on roast ruck, mashed potatoes, pudding, bread, and coffee, Thanksgiving Day. Usually corn meal mush was all we got for breakfast, and the eggs were a great help. Once in a while we had corned beef hash, and then I always wanted seconds.

I received no mail for three months, although I notified my organization and the main postoffice. The first letter I received came February 2nd. It was dated October 5th.

I was operated on for the third time February 7th. They gave me gas at first and then ether to make me sleep a long while. They scraped the bone, and cut away a lot of decayed bone and a growth around the bone.

February 14th a sergeant looked me up to see how I was getting along. Apparently the folks were not receiving my mail, either. Three days later the nurse from another ward where I had been several weeks brought me thirty-three letters which had been looping the loop, some of them for five months.

While lying in bed in the hospital I made a great many souvenirs and useful articles. I made a table mat out of string, and followed that with a "Lazy Squaw" (basket), a most appropriate name, considering the time I spent on it. The more I tried to strengthen it the more lop-sided it became. The Red Cross furnished us with a number of one pounder shells on which we painted various designs. We gave our first efforts to the Red Cross. I painted a caduceus on mine. I sent the next one to my uncle.

February 28th the Doc said I must try to get up and walk around on crutches. The orderly helped me lower my leg to the floor and

to stand up. I had been in bed five months. How my feet did burn! I did not walk any that day, but the next day I got to the next bed without a tumble, and in a little while I was down to the end of the ward.

I left the hospital March 7th for St. Nazaire, where we boarded the transport for the States. We had the first real mush, rolled oats, for breakfast at St. Nazaire, that I had seen in months. How tired I was of that corn meal mixed with water!

Hundreds of soldiers were boarding the transports. I saw many prisoners working about the port. For some reason all the French, both men and women, seemed to be in a great hurry, and moved around on the jump. I rode to the dock in an ambulance. They took my papers at the checking station and up the gang plank I went.

I was assigned to an upper bunk where I had plenty of room to move around. The food was excellent. I made away with my share, all right, as I had been without proper food so long.

At 10:30 a.m., March 9th, the band struck up a lively tune, the anchor was pulled aboard, and we started down the canal toward the open sea. The banks were lined with little Frogs who scrambled eagerly for the pennies and cigarettes thrown to them by the boys on the decks. Even the smallest of them, not over five years old, were crazy for the smokes, and puffed away contentedly when they got a light.

I managed to take in some of the scenery through the port hole. We were soon out on the briny deep, and I was on my way to see the Girl I left behind me, more popularly known as the Statue of Liberty. The first day a lieutenant came around exchanging some of the real stuff for our French money. I had fifteen francs left to turn in. They passed out mince pie as a little hint of what was coming, and it did not take me long to get acquainted with it again.

The sea was rough all night, so I did not sleep much. The Red Cross man brought a graphophone into our compartment. That music was certainly grand. They brought us something extra every day, fruit or chocolate or tobacco.

March 16th I found my bunk too narrow and moved up on deck, where I threw all my worries overboard. I found a box to sit on while I took in a little ocean scenery. We celebrated St. Patrick's Day by starting off with bacon, eggs, mush, bread, coffee, and oranges.

The next day we lost six hours when the ship sprang a leak and the fires were put out in the engine room by the water rushing in. The hole was plugged at last, the water pumped out, and we went merrily on our way, making port on the 20th. We were taken off in a driving rain. The first people to greet us were the Red Cross women with baskets of sweets.

I rode in an ambulance to Camp Stewart, Virginia, where, as soon as I got the chance, I downed five dishes of ice cream at the Red Cross house. After a good dinner I went to bed. I had a lot of



dental work done there. They pulled off all my bridge work and yanked out two badly decayed roots.

We started on the last lap of the long journey back to the Golden West on the last day of March. The food on the train was of the best, bacon and eggs every morning with several other things thrown in. We were allowed seventy-five cents a meal while traveling. Nearly every town and city had some treat waiting for us. Bakersfield gave us a lot of fine oranges. The reception at Fresno was great. The eats included ice cream, jello, fruit, and the famous Fresno raisins.

I tried to phone my folks from the Oakland Pier, but Central was asleep or worse. That was about midnight. After breakfast the next morning the lieutenant gave each of us \$6.85, the amount due us from our ration allowance. We were met at the train by ambulances, which took us across the bay on the nine o'clock ferry, and landed us at Letterman General Hospital in short order.

After several X-ray and culture tests the clinic prescribed massage. I needed it all right, as there was practically no play or bend in my knee. While in Ward 26 (we called it the dugout) I spent my time studying spelling, arithmetic, grammar, shorthand, typing, and Spanish, besides making bead chains and baskets which brought me some extra dollars. I had twenty-two chains at one sale at the White House.

I wrote a little nearly every night on this story, and managed to keep very busy all the time. There were many opportunities for amusement and recreation, moving pictures and vaudeville at the American Red Cross house and outdoors, as well as chances to go on auto rides and to shows down town. When things got a little tiresome one or more of our friends always came along with a picnic, and many people came to see us afternoons.

I was glad to be so near the folks, so I could run home now and then for a good home-cooked dinner.

(Au Revoir.)

Pvt. ELMER H. CURTISS,

Co. H, 102 Infty.



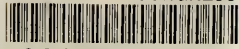








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